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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

WEEKLY SUMMARY Special Report

Nigeria: Gowon Looks Outward

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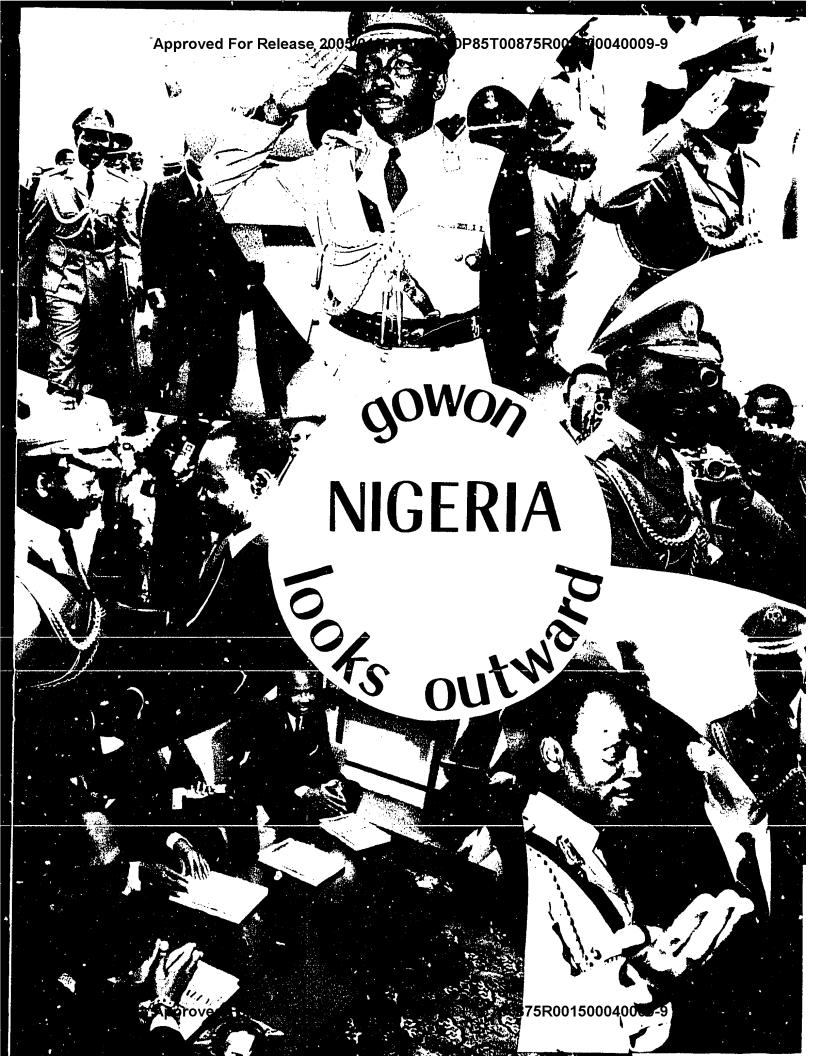
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GOWON AND NEIGHBORS

(clockwise from upper right)

- Macias of Equatorial Guinea
- Eyadema of Togo
- Maga of Dahomey Tombalbaye of Chad









Under the leadership of General Yakubu Gowon, Nigeria's Federal Military Government has pursued an energetic and diversified foreign policy. Where it once pursued an almost exclusively pro Western policy the government shifted gears during the 1967-70 civil war when Soviet aid and popularity grew at the expense of the US and the UK. Soviet popularity has fallen off in the two years since the end of hostilities, but Lagos has not returned to Nigeria's ante-bellum pattern in foreign affairs. In fact, the military government has cultivated a variety of new friends, including the French-speaking African states and the People's Republic of China.

Gowon has not severed Nigeria's traditional ties to the UK, nor has he abandoned his suspicions of Communist regimes, but he is expanding relations with foreign governments regardless of their ideological coloration. He is determined to maintain a more assertive posture in keeping with Nigeria's size and importance in Africa. This determination enhances Lagos' standing in Africa and weakens its ties to Europe. It keeps relations with the superpowers on a pragmatic, issue-oriented basis.

New Emphasis on Foreign Affairs

The civilian regime that governed Nigeria until 1966 professed a non-aligned foreign policy, but in reality it was pro-Western. The architects of that policy were the post-independence politicians and European-educated civil servants whose policy positions reflected their own conservative backgrounds, Nigeria's colonial heritage, and a preoccupation with domestic affairs.

The activism of the present military leaders has pointed Nigeria toward genuine non-alignment and has elevated foreign policy to a much higher priority. As a result, the External Affairs Ministry has emerged from relative obscurity to assume a large role in the formulation and execution of policy. Gowon relies heavily on the bureaucracy for guidance, and civilians in the ministry exert considerable influence on the current regime. It is significant that these civilians take a more radical line, especially on questions relating to European colonialism, than does the military elite.

Okoi Arikpo, the commissioner for external affairs, is among the most influential civilians in the government. Gowon delegates wide



discretionary power to him, but Arikpo also seizes the initiative and at times gets way ahead of Gowon on foreign policy issues. Since the civil war, Arikpo has been occasionally hard to work with from the US point of view, but he must be dealt with since he is the best informed and most decisive figure in the policy-making process.

Nigeria's foreign service is also enjoying new prestige, funds, and influence. Late last year, the government moved to recruit and train a sizable new group of officers. At that time, Gowon also announced plans to open several new missions abroad. Nigeria now has some level of relations with 29 African states, 9 Communist nations, and 39 non-Communist countries.

Gowon's Style

Gowon found himself in power at the age of 31-a professional soldier with no background or

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NIGERIA: General Gowon's African Contacts Since January 1970



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experience in foreign affairs. He received an instant education. With the outbreak of the civil war, the federal government adopted as its principal goal the elimination of international support for the eastern secessionists. The war served to multiply Nigeria's international contacts, which Gowon has continued to expand, Gowon has become polished and professional in his diplomatic dealings, and throughout Africa basks in new-found publicity and stature.

Gowon has made numerous foreign trips since early 1970, originally to demonstrate Nigeria's appreciation for support during the civil war, but increasingly to establish his own image as

a leading statesman and Nigeria's role as the leader of black Africa. He has taken an active part in all of the recent heads of state meetings of the Organization of Anican Unity-long neglected by Nigeria—and has urged other African leaders to do the same. He has toured 14 African countries in the last two years, including all of Nigeria's immediate neighbors, and has received nearly a dozen heads of state in Lagos. These exchanges have resulted in few hard agreements, but each has generated uniformly favorable impressions of Gowon and Nigeria.

Gowon's peripatetic diplomatic style has involved him in a variety of international issues.



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THE O.A.U. Commission of ten, set up to find ways of solving the Middle East conflict has ended its first meeting in Kinshasa. An official announcement said another meeting is to be held in Senegal after further consultation must 'ave been held with both terael and the United Arab Republic as well as the United Nations Secretary-General, U Thant.

The Head of State, General Yakubu Gowon participated in the meeting which was presided over by President Moktar Ould Daddah of Mauritania, the current chairman of O.A.U.

The commission, but up at the Summit meeting of the Organisation in Addis-Ababa last June comprises Nigeria, Congo-Kinshasa, Ethiopia, Liberia, Tanzania, Konya, Ivory Coast, the Senegal, Mauritania and the Cameroun.



Ugandan — Tanzanian 🛮 War:

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PRESIDENT NYERERE of Tanzania.

THE Head of State has called on Tanzania and Uganda to call off their border fighting and resolve their differences peacefully.

a Chinese Colonel was killed during fighting in one of the borders. Both sides have how-ever accused each other

THE Head of State, General Go the two countries was closed last month on the orders of President Idi Amin. Meanwhile there has

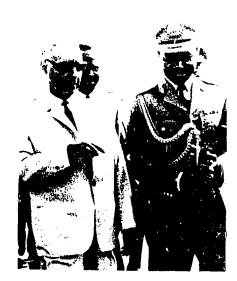
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GOWON REACHES OUT

(clockwise from upper right)

- Ould Daddah of Mauritania
- Kenyatta of Kenya
- US Secretary of State Rogers OAU "Wise Men" with Israeli Prime Minister Meir









He was, for example, a key figure in the OAU "Wise Men" mission which last fall attempted unsuccessfully to find a solution to the Middle East impasse. He also offered advice to both sides during the India-Pakistan war. These personal initiatives have been well received in Africa

The Nigerian public takes pride in Gowon's growing continental fame and in Nigeria's brighter image. Presumably Gowon's awareness of the domestic utility of such patriotic pride has contributed to his eagerness to accommodate the press and to his willingness to make innumerable public speeches while abroad. The attention he receives serves both to drum up popular support for the government and to distract Nigerians from domestic problems.

Gowon's policies have yielded good results abroad, but at some expense at home. Elements in both the civilian and military leadership grumble that Gowon's preoccupation with foreign affairs reduces the time he can devote to pressing domestic problems. To overcome these objections, Gowon constantly alters the make-up of his entourage for trips abroad, making a special effort to give the 12 state governors foreign experience and exposure. This strategy, although popular with those making the trips, has not defused the criticism of his gadabout approach.

Policy Toward Africa

Among the most dramatic recent developments in Nigeria's foreign policy have been its growing support for the OAU and its shift to a hard line on the question of European disengagement from colonial rule. Nigeria had paid scant attention to the OAU, but changed its view when

that body passed a resolution supporting Lagos during the civil war. Throughout most of the war, federal leaders nursed suspicions that the OAU's African Liberation Committee—headquartered in Tanzania, which supported Biafra—was channeling aid to the Biafrans. With the end of the war, Gowon has shown greater enthusiasm for the Liberation Committee and for the OAU's Defense Commission. Moreover, he has used OAU meetings as a platform to gain Africa-wide political exposure for himself. At the OAU summit in Addis Ababa last June, he called for the "liberation of at least one colonial territory in the next three years."

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In west Africa, where Gowon's interest and influence are at their height, Nigeria has assumed an active but moderate stance. The military government has reached a rapprochement with the states that recognized or supported Biafra during the civil war. Lagos is now emphasizing a

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mundane but very practical approach to regional cooperation. Gowon's many travels have produced potentially useful agreements on expanding communications, transport, and trade between Nigeria and each of its French-speaking neighbors. The Nigerian Government has faced periodic difficulties in protecting its nationals working in, and occasionally expelled from, such states as Ghana, Equatorial Guinea, and Zaire, but, in general, Nigeria now has very cooperative relations with all its neighbors. Gowon has stressed over and over again that Nigeria has no territorial ambitions and that it respects the sovereignty of its smaller neighbors. He is mindful that Nigeria's huge economy, physical size, and military capability inevitably have an intimidating effect on the other states in the area.

Implications for the UK

Nigeria's concentration on African affairs obviously has implications for Europe, in particular for the British. Their popularity in Nigeria-previously somewhat recovered from the civil war low-has fallen off again over the past year. Nigeria was the first Commonwealth member to withdraw from the Study Group on Indian Ocean Security in protest of the UK decision last year to sell arms to South Africa. Gowon has attempted to take the lead in opposing the effort to implement a Rhodesian settlement this year. Official and unofficial reactions in Nigeria have been entirely negative to both the Pearce hearings in Rhodesia and to the UK veto of the Rhodesian resolution at the UN Security Council meeting in Addis Ababa last month.

Although Gowon's progressive rhetoric is consistently critical of the UK, he has been careful not to jeopardize his 15-million-pound annual trade surplus with Britain. Oil, largely extracted by the British, is his key export. On the Rhodesian issue, Nigeria has limited itself to calls for obviously unattainable UN and African solutions. Gowon has not sought to implement any economic sanctions that could work to Nigeria's

detriment. Through it all, the UK has continued to be Nigeria's most important partner in the fields of defense, foreign trade, private investment, and technical assistance.

The Big Powers

China—Nigeria's desire to show itself independent of the West was underscored in its unequivocal support for the admission of the People's Republic of China to the UN and the expulsion of Taiwan. Formal recognition of China was negotiated in early 1971, and later in the year the two countries exchanged ambassadors. Last month, Lagos announced that it would enter into an aid agreement with Peking, emphasizing again the Nigerian desire to diversify its international contacts and avoid reliance solely on European sources of economic assistance.

United States-The foreign policies of the US and Nigeria differ on most major world issues. The government and the Nigerian public feel, for example, that Washington is sympathetic to the colonial regimes in southern Africa. Still, the US is a major source of Nigeria's foreign aid, is its second most important source of imports, and provides its third largest foreign market. Thus, despite continuing disagreements on specific issues, relations between the two countries have improved since their nadir in the civil war, when widespread pro-Biafran sympathies in the US reduced mutual understanding to a minimal level. The likelihood is that the trend toward better working relations will continue. Gowon continues to encourage international capital to come to Nigeria, although he has instituted complex regulations requiring Nigerian public and private participation in all new enterprises. US private investment in Nigeria now totals roughly \$800 million, virtually all in petroleum, and American businessmen continue to receive reasonably good treatment from the Nigerian Government.

USSR – Ironically, given Moscow's firm backing of the federal government during the civil war

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and Gowon's talk of positive non-alignment, the US is faring much better these days than the USSR. When Western arms suppliers balked at supplying Lagos at the outbreak of the civil war, the Soviets ingratiated themselves with substantial military supplies. This created much good will, as—to a lesser extent—did a trade agreement signed late last year. On balance, however, the Soviets' good standing has steadily eroded during

the last two years.

Outlook

Gowon's initiatives in foreign policy involve much progressive rhetoric, but they have little ideological content. He is dedicated to making Nigeria a significant Third World leader completely independent of the major powers. Gowon's inclination is to expand his non-Western contacts. He has recently explored opportunities for securing petroleum technology from India and Japan, for example, and he is almost certain to forge closer links with China. In Africa, Gowon will continue to seek the leadership of the rhetorical war against colonialism. He is likely to provide token aid to those actually fighting this battle, but there is little chance that he will involve Nigerians in any genuinely revolutionary campaigns.

The foreign policy options open to Gowon have been limited by Nigeria's total dependence on oil. Revenue is now sufficient for all foreign exchange needs, but Nigeria could not endure a prolonged embargo, nor could it maintain current production levels without the many foreigners who hold key positions. Unlike several members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, Nigeria is likely—in the immediate future, at least—to take moderate stands in its negotiations with the major international petroleum companies. As Nigeria becomes steadily less dependent on Western finance and manpower, however, Gowon will pursue an increasingly nationalistic foreign policy.

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